

# pioneering garden

---

## a pioneering garden

It helps to know the rainfall on a particular site. The farm on which this half-hectare garden was built kept records that showed 450 millimetres per year. The high knoll upon which it sits points into the prevailing westerly weather and is subject to high wind and quick run-off. This, combined with a heavy volcanic topsoil of pH 6 over pH 7.5 subsoil, made it a very interesting project indeed.

Within eight years the site was totally contained by trees and shrubs, whilst still allowing spectacular views of sunsets beneath tree canopies. These trees abated the power of the wind from wild storms and framed dramatic views down the hill to an occasionally flooded Maribyrnong River. After 12 years, with a little early guidance from the designer and periodic care from the busy owners, the garden matured into a most relaxing and satisfying landscape.

The setting for the house commands extended views of the distant landscape looking over open grass with some tall trees and shrubs. Most of the intensive garden was limited to about 300 square metres on the approach side to the house, where the house and nearby windbreak plantation offered relief from the relentless wind. Physical

comfort always needs to be a high priority in the design of any garden where people live. This garden offered protection from all of the elements with shading from the sun in the critical places.

The planned landscape developed a strong sense of arrival for both owners and visitors. The first view of the house site appears abruptly at the end of a long progression lined by a dense boundary plantation of Monterey cypress pines, used as shelter for horses. You turn left suddenly to be presented with a dense copse of suckering *Allocasuarina glauca* mixed with *Acacia pycnantha*. The wattles are not obvious until they flower, their golden balls prominent against the grey she-oaks. Turning this corner into the house garden the view beneath the broad arch of she-oaks is to the white trunks of *Eucalyptus leucoxylon megalocarpa* caught in the sun. The eucalypts then continue along the driveway past the formal entry and visitors' carpark to screen the garage.

The garden was planted with some of the first batch of the so-called dwarf form of *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* that came onto the market in 1973. These grew well to all of 10 metres high, hardly dwarf. Seed orchards still do not produce